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A SHORT
ADDRESS
TO THE

CHARTERED COMPANIES

OF

ENGLAND;

CALCULATED

To point out the TENDENCY of

The BILL

Brought into PARLIAMENT

by Mr. FOX.

By a CITIZEN.
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A S H O R T
A D D R E S S, &c.

THE very extraordinary bill, which Mr. Fox has brought down to the House of Commons, without any previous notice of its extent, and which he is endeavouring to hurry through that assembly, under the plea of necessity, has called me forth to excite the attention of every body of men, who at this day enjoy their separate and distinct Rights under the sanction of a public Charter. In an address to such a people, who from their situations have had every advantage of education, and who have the assistance of reason to decide upon the true spirit of the laws of England, I will not attempt to explain how
sacred

sacred the faith of Charters has been held in every reign, and how fatal have the consequences proved to those despotic Tyrants, who have dared to violate these Rights, so dear to the subjects of the British Empire. Thank heaven, that though the Senate may be weak in virtuous men, we have a Prince upon the Throne, who yields protection to his meanest subject !

I shall therefore proceed immediately to point out the nature and tendency of this bill, and endeavour to prove by arguments founded upon reason and common sense, how gloomy is the prospect to every chartered body in the realm, and how dangerous such a measure must be to the civil liberties of the Country.

This Bill is introduced under the specious pretext of giving relief to the East-India Company; I am ready to acknowledge the necessity of relief, but must condemn the manner in which it is offered, nay, insisted upon by the minister. He stands forward in Parliament, and by a misrepresentation of the Company's affairs proclaims them in a state of Bankruptcy; he has accounted for their debts, but has
concealed



concealed their credits : If it is through design, he means to deceive the parliament and the people ; if through ignorance, it affords a melancholy prospect to the Proprietors of India-Stock, who must have the mortification to see the management of their mercantile affairs under the immediate direction of such a novice in commerce. But give me leave to tell you, Gentlemen, that Mr. Fox was charged with a misrepresentation of their affairs, by a Member of the House and a Director of the India Company ; though his influence, not unassisted by corruption, has been exerted to prevent such necessary information being conveyed to the kingdom through the channel of the public papers. Nay, so effectually has he stop't this source of information, that the remonstrances of many of the members against the violence of such proceedings have been designedly mistated, and the most spirited speeches against the despotism of the bill have been totally suppressed. If such improper exertions are made by the minister, to blind the understanding of the subjects they

* Mr. Samuel Smith, jun.

N. B. It will be shewn by an account prepared and signed by the proper officers at the India-House.—Mr. Fox gave the Company credit for only 3,200,000*l.* and the Chairman of the India Company said in the General Court, "*that, to be sure, Mr. Fox had omitted the Credits.*"

they must have recourse to other publications to declare the truth, and which, I trust, will be an apology for this voluntary address of a fellow Citizen.—It is upon this misrepresentation of the Company's affairs, that Mr. Fox principally supports his measure of the necessity of annulling their Chartered Rights ; but it is a privilege enjoyed by the meanest subject of the British Empire to be heard in his defence ; it is a privilege which the Company have at this time a right to maintain ; it is a privilege which the legislative body of this Kingdom have never disputed.—In their defence before Parliament, the true situation of their affairs will be laid open to publick view, the principal causes of their debts will be explained, and their abilities to discharge them fully established. By such an investigation into their concerns, the House will perceive that the Company have not only been defending their territorial possessions against the incursions of the native powers, but have been expending their treasures in the support of a national war in India. I am well aware that an advocate for Mr. Fox's bill will come forward in answer to this assertion,

ferion; and tell the publick that the Company have wantonly declared war against the Asiatic Princes, and invaded their territories with the inhumanity of plunderers. But I will stop him and say, the Minister of the day has had the controul over the Company in every measure of policy and revenue in that part of the world, and for his conduct in the management of that Government, he ought to be responsible to his country.—

I wish not by bare assertions to mislead the understanding of the public; let them deliberate with common sense upon the expediency of the Minister's measures, and let them decide with impartiality. That abuses have existed in several departments of the government in India, I am willing to acknowledge; and what government of the more refined and longer established nations in Europe have been free from them? A reform in the expenditure of the public treasures has long been the language of Parliament: The Right Hon. Edmund Burke stood forth the zealous supporter of such a measure, when out of place, but now he is gratified with power, his
zeal

zeal for such public services has abated; he has only carried his reform into the Royal Palace, and destroyed the comforts of the Monarch; he has passed over in silence that formidable catalogue of sinecure places and pensions, which have been too long a burthen to the civil list, and to the revenues of the country, because they are the permanent support of the minister in Parliament. It was by such an attempt to enlarge his power, by a disposal of every profitable place to his dependants, as a reward for their vassalage, that the minister of Great-Britain first sowed the seeds of discontent in America, and in the end dismembered the empire. As similar causes produce similar effects, what will a reasonable man infer from the extensive patronage of the East being at the disposal of the minister; it will be dangerous in the hands of a bad man; it will be a temptation to the man of public virtue. But let me stop here and examine what measures Mr. Fox is adopting, for the establishment of such a power: "*The destruction of Chartered Rights, which have been solemnly sealed by the faith of Parliament, and by the faith of the Monarch.*" Such an infringe-

infringement upon the Chartered Rights of the East-India Company, must sound an alarm among the several ranks of men, who, for valuable considerations, have obtained particular immunities, and have been secured in the possession of them by the sanction of the Legislature. And there is another respectable body of men, besides the East-India Company, that are at this day flourishing under the power of a charter, and are become the main support of the national credit. Is the faith of Parliament more solemnly pledged to that body than to the East-India Company? Is the faith of that man to be held sacred, who has avowedly declared in the British Senate, that the consideration given by the Bank of England, for the Renewal of their Charter, was inadequate to the privileges obtained? Is his faith rendered more sacred, by a declaration in the same House, upon the Renewal of the Charter of the India Company, that the demands of the Minister of that day were exorbitant, and were a species of public robbery? Does his desperate attempt to break down the barrier of public faith, and make his depredations on the rights of the people, confirm

confirm the sincerity of such professions? Can the ambition of a man who attempts to violate the Chartered Rights of one Company, be tempered into a veneration for the Chartered Rights of another? It is an ambition that was unknown in the Republic of Rome, and will never be found in the purer government of Britain. Nature never formed in the same mould the man of Justice and the Tyrant. There is another body of men, who have raised their consequence under the privileges of a Charter; who, by their situation in the first commercial city of the world, may excite the jealousy of a minister, and in their next application to Parliament, for assistance to repair their public buildings, which were destroyed in the year 1780, and which will remain as monuments of a neglected police, to disgrace the annals of History; on that application, I say, the minister may proclaim in Parliament, that the Corporation of the City of London are in a state of bankruptcy; that they have, by a mismanagement of their affairs, ruined their finances; that they are incapable of extricating themselves from this distressed situation; that they have petitioned
for

for relief, but stand in need of reformation, that reformation and relief must go hand in hand. With this language he may mislead the Parliament, and seize upon their Charter, and as his public virtue prompted him to undertake the management of their estates, his private honesty will be a sufficient security for his conduct, as a faithful guardian. If the Capitol is taken, what must be the fate of every smaller fortress that supports it? A general annihilation. Amidst this universal storm, the property of the Church cannot rest secure, for as there are many bodies of men in that profession, who enjoy their privileges under the sanction of the Legislature, the Minister of the day may by the same line of conduct be authorized to infringe upon their rights, and confiscate their estates under the favourite plea of necessity. In short, if the Minister has authority to annul one Charter, the same authority will empower him to destroy another; and consequently no Act of Parliament can secure the possession of property to any subjects of the realm, because men of desperate fortunes in every change of administration, may assert a right to dispose of it for
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the public service.—In this point of view I consider the nature and tendency of the Bill in question; but when I reflect upon the manner of its introduction into the House of Commons, and the situations, as well as the principles of those men who cherished it in its infancy, and have supported it through every stage into its present form of despotism, I am free to own that it calls for the most mature deliberation of every public body of men, before it is established by the sacred name of law.

When a motion was made in Parliament by G—— S—— for a Committee to examine into the state of judicature in the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, the House wished to pay a compliment to that gentleman, who stood forth the zealous advocate for justice in our Asiatic dominions, by appointing him a member of that Committee; and the other members of it were no less desirous of shewing a respect for such a character by placing him in the chair. But his ambition in that situation was too great to be confined within the narrow limits of common

common justice ; he felt an eagerness to enter upon the more spacious field of policy and revenue. Charmed with the brilliancy of the thought, he hurried to the House with all the consequence of a Chairman, and under the vague term of “ *an enlargement of their powers,*” obtained permission to enter upon the important business which had been before entrusted to the Secret Committee. To follow him through every maze of those voluminous reports, would be an endless task ; it is sufficient to say, that in all that laboured decision of justice upon the actions of the Governor-General of Bengal, there cannot be traced out a single vestige either of the abilities or integrity of that Asiatic Statesman. The Lord Advocate, in veneration of so high a character, moved for his recall upon the grounds only of expediency ; he scorned to injure so great, so good a name with the undeserved stigma of delinquency. But the General, deciding upon the integrity of Mr. Hastings, by a retrospective view of his own, has declared him to be the most abandoned wretch that ever disgraced the annals of Indostan. From this instant the General began to entertain some

some favourable hopes of displacing the most valuable servants of the Company in India, and, by entering again a champion upon that field of action, foresaw the most flattering prospect of success to every future undertaking. It was then this child of despotism was first conceived; it has since been fostered with a silent secrecy; it is now brought forth into public view under the mask of necessity, and supported by that body of men, who stile themselves the guardians of our rights. Examine the several clauses of the bill, and judge from your own reason, whether that extensive Empire of the East can be safe in the hands of seven men laden with the patronage of three hundred places, and free from the controul of Parliament; and perhaps those seven men may be selected from the chosen few, who had the modesty to propose themselves for the office of Judges in a cause, in which they are themselves a self-created Jury. Is it consistent with public honour, or with private virtue, to decide upon the merits of a cause, where the Judge by a particular decision secures to himself the forfeited rights of the criminal? a Turkish

Bashaw

Balfaw might applaud the measure and revere the man.—I will now, my fellow Citizens, take my leave of you ; but must recommend a watchful eye upon the Chairman of the India Company ; and if upon the success of this bill you should discover him seated upon one of the Imperial Thrones, your own sense will determine how *sacred* must such a trust be esteemed by him, who offered himself to be the protector of those Chartered Rights, which his integrity to the *purser* principles of his party has obliged him to abandon. With respect to the other Emperors, *such integrity* might be deemed by the lawless Libertine a sufficient security for the protection of the public Rights, but the virtuous subject will dread it, as ever ready to discover this masked battery, from whence desperate men will play off their artillery against the throne of monarchy, and raise upon its ruins the standard of a Republic.

A CITIZEN.

